

# Chapter 1

## Purpose and Need



# **Changes Between the Draft and Final SEIS**

The following changes were made to Chapter 1 between the Draft and Final SEIS. Minor corrections, explanations, and edits are not included in this list.

- Figures 1-1 and 1-2 have been changed to better illustrate the relationship of the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines to the Northwest Forest Plan. Figure 1-2 and the related discussion now include ingrowth into late-successional forest.
- The purpose statement was edited to better correspond with the species management objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan.

# Chapter 1

## Purpose and Need

### Introduction

This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) assesses three alternatives for amending species-specific management direction for some rare and/or isolated species on federal lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the Pacific Northwest and northern California within the range of the northern spotted owl (Figure 1-1). This management direction is contained in the Forest Service Regional Guides and in the land and resource management plans for National Forests and BLM Districts amended by the 1994 Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, generally referred to as the Northwest Forest Plan. References in this Final SEIS to the Northwest Forest Plan, or to changes or amendments to the Northwest Forest Plan, are intended as references to those portions of individual land and resource management plans amended by the 1994 Record of Decision. This Final SEIS incorporates and supplements the Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS (USDA, USDI 1994a). The underlying needs and the purpose for developing this SEIS are described in this chapter.

This SEIS analysis process and document preparation is a joint effort of the Forest Service and the BLM (often referenced herein as the Agencies), with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assisting as a cooperating agency.

The selected alternative would amend those standards and guidelines in the Northwest Forest Plan that address:

- Survey and Manage,
- Protection Buffers,
- Provide Additional Protection for Caves, Mines, and Abandoned Wooden Bridges and Buildings That Are Used as Roost Sites for Bats (referenced herein as “Provide Additional Protection for Bats”),
- Management of Recreation Sites to Minimize Disturbance to Species, and
- Protect Sites From Grazing.

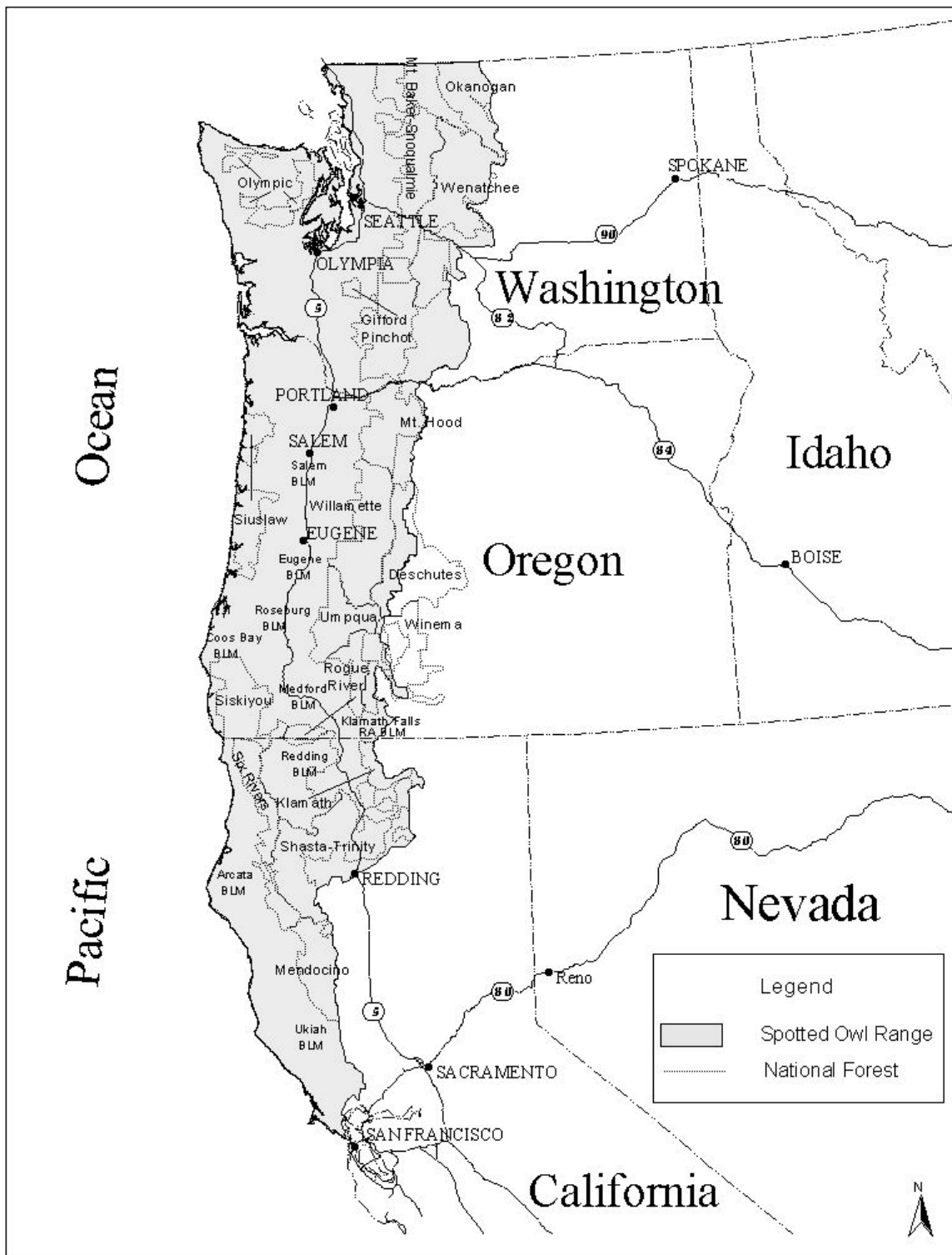
The action alternatives clarify language of the standards and guidelines, identify the species management needed, eliminate inconsistent and redundant direction, and establish a process that responds to new information, while continuing to meet the underlying needs of the Northwest Forest Plan.

The more than 400 species addressed by the standards and guidelines proposed for amendment in the action alternatives do not include species currently listed as “threatened” or “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act, except Canada lynx, whose listing as “threatened” was effective April 24, 2000. Also, this amendment and SEIS does not consider other changes to the Northwest Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, does not make any changes to land allocations except for minor acreages of Late-Successional Reserves and Managed Late-Successional Areas created by Protection Buffers, and does not change other management direction.

### Background

On April 2, 1993, President Clinton and many of his Cabinet Secretaries held a day-long forest conference in Portland, Oregon, at which time he chartered the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to develop a long-term plan to relieve an impasse in the Pacific Northwest between

Figure 1-1. Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.



managing to protect late-successional and old-growth forest-associated species and managing for a predictable and sustainable level of timber harvest. President Clinton directed the Agencies to prepare a plan that would balance an appropriate level of protection for wildlife, forest health, and waterways, with the human and the economic dimensions dependent on timber sales. The President established the purpose and need for the Northwest Forest Plan by saying:

*“First, we must never forget the human and the economic dimensions of these problems. Where sound management policies can preserve the health of forest lands, sales should go forward...”*

*“Second, as we craft a plan, we need to protect the long-term health of our forests, our wildlife, and our waterways... [W]e hold them in trust for future generations.”* (USDA, USDI 1994a, p. 1-4; USDA, USDI 1994b, p. 3.)

### NFP Land Allocations

#### Designated Areas

- Congressionally Reserved
- Areas
- Late-Successional Reserves
- Adaptive Management Areas
- Managed Late-Successional Areas
- Administratively Withdrawn Areas
- Riparian Reserves

#### Matrix

- Matrix

The Northwest Forest Plan resulting from this charge was adopted in April 1994. The Northwest Forest Plan has the dual purpose of providing for management of habitat for late-successional and old-growth forest related species while providing for a predictable and sustainable level of timber harvest. The habitat management elements of the Northwest Forest Plan are based primarily on a system of Late-Successional, Riparian, and other reserves. The Northwest Forest Plan is designed to provide for the habitat needs of more than 1,000 species associated with late-successional or old-growth forests on federal lands in the western portions of Washington, Oregon, and northern California. Of the 24.5 million federally managed acres within the Northwest Forest Plan area, almost 20 million either provide for old-growth and late-successional forest conditions under designations of Wilderness, National Parks, and other areas, or they are managed for such conditions as Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, and other allocations under provisions of the Northwest Forest Plan.

The Survey and Manage alternatives affect up to an additional 2 percent of the Northwest Forest Plan area, when the area of species sites found in the past 2 years are projected for 25 years to estimate the results of surveys of all late-successional forests in the Matrix and Adaptive Management Area land allocations (Figure 1-2).

As shown in Figure 1-3 below, approximately 81 percent of the Northwest Forest Plan area (and 86 percent of the currently existing late-successional forest) is in reserves, while 19 percent is in Matrix or Adaptive Management Areas and contribute to Probable Sale Quantity (timber harvest). In the next decade, regeneration or partial timber harvest in late-successional forests are predicted to modify or convert about 1 percent of the Northwest Forest Plan area (or about 3 percent of the total late-successional forest) and approximately 0.7 percent will be subjected to stand-replacement wildfires. Approximately 2 to 3 times the amount of late-successional forest modified will become late-successional as “ingrowth,” and the total late-successional forest will increase approximately 600,000 acres in the next decade.

The Agencies have been diligent in implementing the Northwest Forest Plan at all levels. The result has been an unprecedented level of interagency cooperation and ecosystem-based management of late-successional and aquatic resources. Approximately 370 watershed analyses have been completed; assessment documents have been completed for more than 75 percent of the 7.5 million acres of Late-Successional Reserves; and plans have been completed for 9 of the 10 Adaptive Management Areas. In fiscal years 1997 and 1998, the BLM and Forest Service offered over 1.6 billion board feet of timber for sale. These accomplishments have been achieved while meeting commitments to manage, protect, and restore forest ecosystems in the Northwest Forest Plan area. For example, there has been increased use of thinning in young stands region-wide to reduce the risk of wildfires and to maintain the long-term health of federal forests. Cooperative

**Figure 1-2.** Relative effects of different Survey and Manage alternatives upon acreage within the Northwest Forest Plan area. Reserves portion includes all federal acres regardless of vegetation condition, about a third of which is late-successional forest. Additional bars extending into the Matrix and Adaptive Management Area (AMA) represent the acres projected to be managed as known sites for Survey and Manage species under each of the four alternatives, most of which are expected to be late-successional forest.

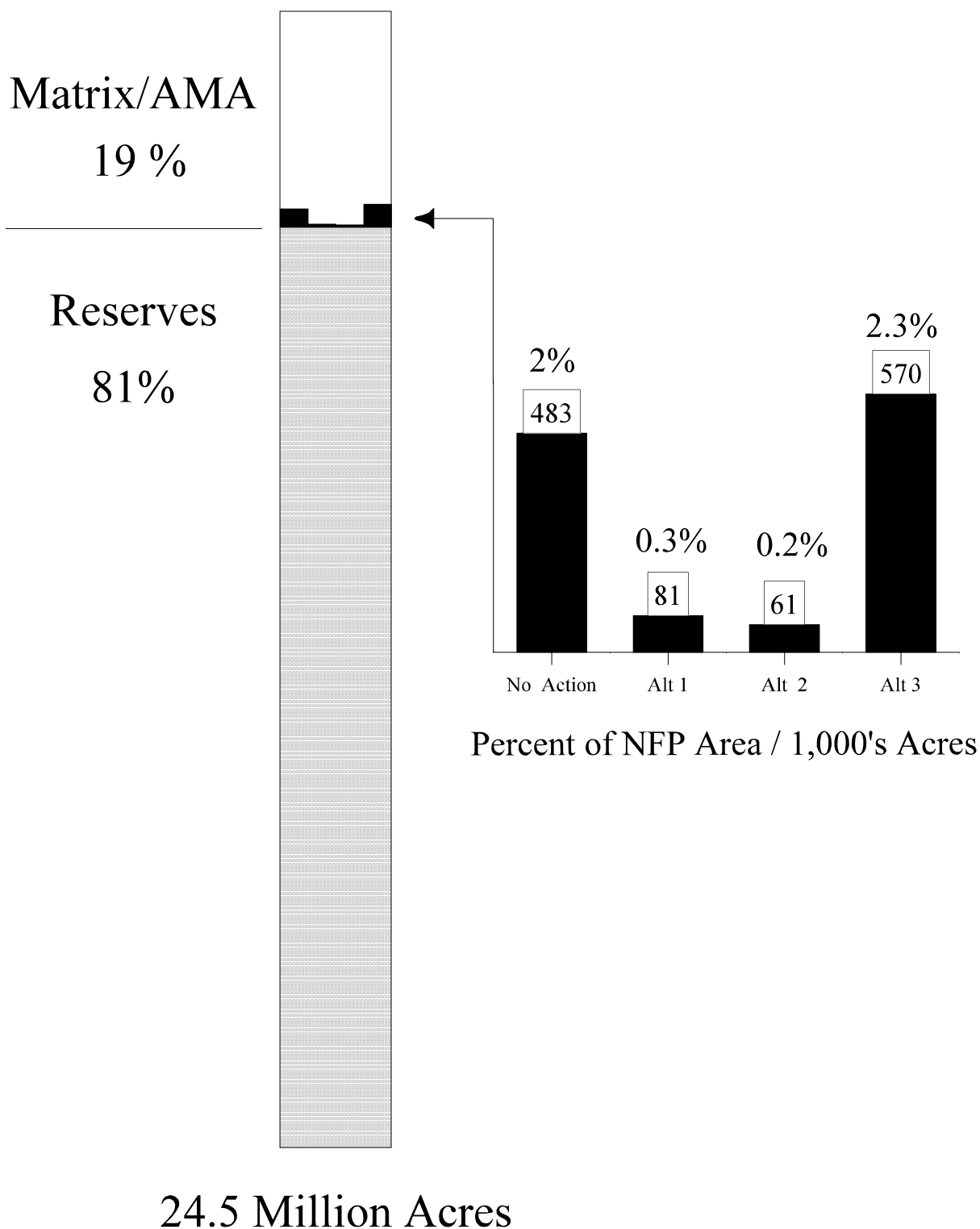
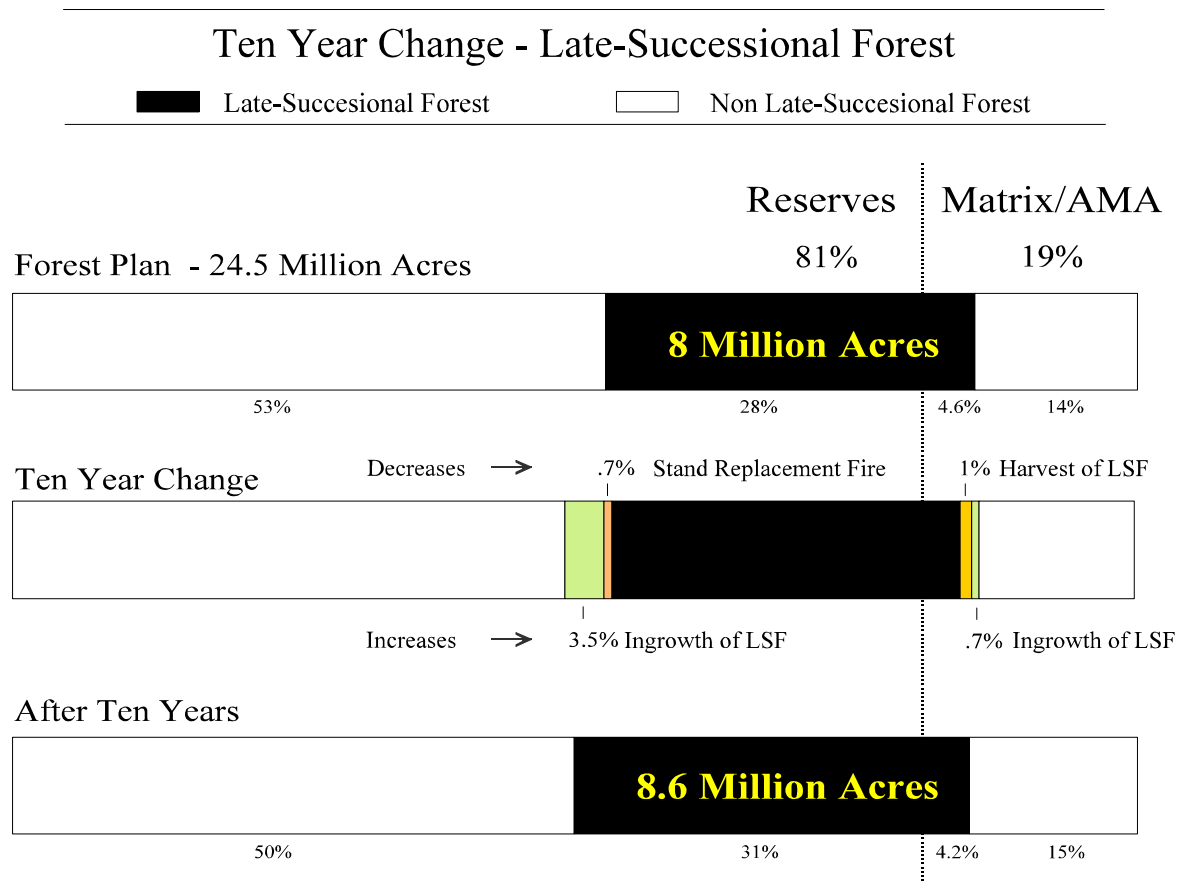


Figure 1-3. Distribution of late-successional forest to reserves and matrix, and predicted first decade modification and ingrowth.



research has increased, over 900 miles of roads have been closed in Key Watersheds, and hundreds of culverts have been replaced. Various data sources have been searched and more than 75,000 acres of field surveys have been conducted for Survey and Manage species, resulting in more than 42,000 species site data records.

As described below, however, the Agencies have had some difficulties implementing certain elements of the Northwest Forest Plan pertaining to Survey and Manage and related measures. Additionally, in August 1999 while this SEIS was being prepared, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington found implementation of the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines to be deficient in two ways. The Court found that the Agencies 1996 written interpretation that “implementation” referred to the date that a project decision document is signed, was not consistent with language in the Northwest Forest Plan Record of Decision (ROD)(USDA, USDI 1994b). The Court also found that the Agencies written Survey Protocol exempting some watersheds from red tree vole surveys was not consistent with the Northwest Forest Plan ROD. A settlement agreement resulted in voluntary dismissal of this action with prejudice. It allows the Agencies to conduct timber sales based on 1-year surveys for 13 species for certain listed or appealed activities. The agreement expires with the final agency action (Record of Decision) for this SEIS.

When the Northwest Forest Plan was being prepared, some concern was expressed that certain species might be so rare or isolated that the system of reserves and other elements in the Northwest Forest Plan would not provide reasonable assurance of persistence on federally managed lands. This concern often originated simply from lack of scientific information about a species and its habitat and distribution. In other cases, the concern was that management direction for the seven land allocations in the Northwest Forest Plan would not adequately protect specific local habitat needs of some species.

Because of these concerns, scientists from the FEMAT expert species ratings panels were asked to conduct additional species analysis and identify “relatively minor modifications” to mitigate possible adverse effects. The suggested modifications could not involve major changes that would make the option more similar to another option (USDA et al. 1993, p. IV-47). This analysis considered 23 possible mitigation measures and eight were adopted. Among the added measures were four that are generally species-specific (Survey and Manage, Provide Additional Protection for Bats, Management of Recreation Sites to Minimize Disturbance to Species, Protect Sites From Grazing); these four measures are addressed in this SEIS. This SEIS also addresses Protection Buffers which are species-specific standards and guidelines that were included early in the design of the Northwest Forest Plan. Protection Buffers benefit 24 species.

The intent of these five species-specific measures was to benefit some bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), fungi, lichens, mollusks (snails and slugs), amphibians (salamanders), vascular plants (plants with stems), birds (five species), mammals (Canada lynx, red tree vole, and six species of bats), and four groups of arthropods (insects and related species). The resultant standards and guidelines have considerable overlap, providing similar protection levels for some species. For example, 13 Protection Buffer species are also included in Survey and Manage and 8 of the 11 Protect From Grazing species are included in Survey and Manage.

In addition, the Survey and Manage Standards and Guidelines state that species may be moved to different levels of management or be removed when there is new information. However, the standards and guidelines do not specify the criteria for such moves in Survey and Manage. There is no similar provision for moving or removing species in the standards and guidelines for Protection Buffers, bats, grazing, or recreation sites.

The Survey and Manage and selected other mitigation measures were designed to provide additional benefits to species while maintaining the balance between late-successional and old-growth forest habitats and forest products. Mitigation deemed impractical was not prescribed. For example, surveys prior to ground-disturbing activities were specified only for species that the scientists believed could be reasonably located during such surveys. In cases where a species has characteristics that make its location difficult when surveying prior to ground-disturbing activities, the Northwest Forest Plan specified that extensive surveys were a more practical and efficient approach (USDA, USDI 1994b, p. C-5). The Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS fully recognized this situation might raise the level of uncertainty for some species, but considered this risk appropriate given the balance of needs to be accommodated for species management and extractive uses. Of the 10 alternatives examined for the Northwest Forest Plan, the selected alternative was deemed to provide the most appropriate level of management for late-successional and old-growth forest related species, while providing a sustainable and predictable level of timber harvest and other forest uses. The benefits or detriments of the adopted mitigation measures on environmental, economic, and social consequences were anticipated to have “relatively minor” changes on expected effects of the alternatives (USDA, USDI 1994a, p. 3&4-39).

In the 6 years since adoption of the Northwest Forest Plan, much new information has been gained about the 400-plus species managed by the Survey and Manage and related species-specific standards and guidelines. While the new information indicates that species objectives are generally being met, it also shows a need to correct several problems with these specific standards and guidelines. These problems result in protections beyond the level needed to meet species objectives, difficulties in implementing the standards and guidelines, and inefficient use of funds and personnel.



# The Underlying Need for the Proposed Action

The Northwest Forest Plan, as stated in its 1994 Final SEIS, responds to dual needs: the need for forest habitat and the need for forest products.

*“.... The need for forest habitat is the need for a healthy forest ecosystem with habitat that will support populations of native species (particularly those associated with late-successional and old-growth forest) and includes protection for riparian areas and waters.*

*“The need for forest products from forest ecosystems is the need for a sustainable supply of timber and other forest products that will help maintain the stability of local and regional economies on a predictable and long-term basis.” (USDA, USDI 1994a, p. 1-4.)*

The Survey and Manage and related standards and guidelines are among several mitigation measures developed to reduce negative effects and to increase management levels above those described in Alternative 9 in the Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS (USDA, USDI 1994a). Without modification, the Agencies are unable to fully meet the original purpose and need of the Northwest Forest Plan due to difficulties implementing the Survey and Manage and related mitigation measures. These difficulties were largely unforeseen when the Survey and Manage and related measures were added to the Northwest Forest Plan in 1994 because the mitigations, by definition, addressed species about which the Agencies had limited information at that time. The experience gained in the last 6 years through implementation, along with additional information learned about the species, constitutes new information that the Agencies seek to address.

Implementation difficulties include:

1. Some species managed by Protection Buffers or Survey and Manage Categories 1 and/or 2 are much more common than anticipated when the Northwest Forest Plan was prepared, which results in more restrictions on timber harvest and other management activities than needed to meet species persistence objectives.
2. Some species have been found to need more management than originally prescribed. For example, the No-Action Alternative requires extensive surveys for some rare fungi, but does not specify “manage known sites.”
3. Some Protection Buffer Standards and Guidelines create land allocations associated with species sites, even though the standards and guidelines for the allocation are not consistent with the needs of the species. Additionally, some Protection Buffer species are also in Survey and Manage, creating overlapping and sometimes conflicting direction.
4. Because some Category 2 species (which require surveys prior to ground-disturbing activities) cannot reasonably be detected or identified in the field or with simple laboratory or office examination, projects either incur unreasonably high costs of surveying for these species or are placed on indefinite hold while more efficient survey methods are sought.
5. Overlapping and unclear direction has resulted in funding surveys that may not be necessary or are not efficient, given species management objectives. Project costs have been unreasonably expensive and time consuming, which reduces the number of management activities that can be done because of limited funds and personnel.
6. Direction for bats, some cavity-nesting birds, and Canada lynx provides management details rather than overall objectives; the details in the standards and guidelines for these species have become outdated as new information has become available. In some cases, existing direction is even detrimental to the species. Canada lynx has been listed under the Endangered Species Act since the Northwest Forest Plan was adopted.

7. The adaptive management process is not clearly described, which has made it difficult for the Agencies to make changes, even though a species appears to qualify for a change in management requirements based on new information.
8. Required completion dates for surveys need to be clarified to make the program manageable. Under the current interpretation of the Northwest Forest Plan, requirements to survey may arise on projects after the planning has been completed, depending on circumstances beyond the control of the Agencies. There is a need to know survey requirements during the planning stages of projects, since the information gathered in these surveys is intended to be incorporated into the design of the projects.

None of these implementation difficulties necessarily indicate that a wholesale reorientation away from Survey and Manage measures is needed in the manner by which Northwest Forest Plan meets persistence objectives for relatively rare and unknown species. Several public comments on the Draft SEIS encouraged the Agencies to undertake just such a fundamental overhaul. After careful consideration, however, the Agencies have concluded that engaging in a fundamental restructuring of Survey and Manage standards and guidelines at this time is not warranted. The information presently available does not indicate any other feasible alternatives exist that could satisfy the foundational objectives underlying the Northwest Forest Plan. The Agencies will continue to acquire new information to markedly improve implementation in a way that will increase efficiencies and provide the Agencies with information that may facilitate a more fundamental shift at an appropriate time.

## **The Purpose**

The purpose of the proposed action is to modify Survey and Manage and related mitigation measures to better identify the management needed, to clarify language, to eliminate inconsistent and redundant direction, and to establish a process that responds to new information, while continuing to meet the underlying needs of the Northwest Forest Plan identified in the 1994 Final SEIS, including providing for the viability of late-successional and old-growth associated vertebrate species, and providing for a similar standard for non-vertebrates to the extent practicable (USDA, USDI 1994a, pp.1-4, and USDA, USDI 1994b, p. 44).

## **The Proposed Action**

The Agencies are proposing to amend portions of the Northwest Forest Plan to improve the efficiency and consistency in applying mitigation measures, while continuing to meet the balanced objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan including providing a reasonable level of assurance for persistence of the late-successional and old-growth associated species addressed by the Survey and Manage and related standards and guidelines, and providing for other forest management activities. While retaining the overall strategy for mitigation, the three action alternatives considered in this SEIS would modify how the Agencies provide mitigation for certain species. Since the scope of this action is intentionally narrow, existing plans would continue largely, though not entirely, unmodified by any of the action alternatives.

The proposed action is to modify some of the mitigation measures identified above (in the Background section). To respond to the Purpose and Underlying Need, the action alternatives, in various ways:

- Redefine the Survey and Manage categories to better reflect the currently understood relative rarity of the species.
- Clarify objectives and management direction for the various categories.

- Assign some species to categories that provide a different level of management to more correctly align management levels with the needs of the species based on currently available inventory data.
- Define the process for changing management levels for species and for adding or removing species management, based on changes in knowledge of their relative rarity or concern for persistence.
- Consolidate Protect From Grazing and some Protection Buffer measures with similar Survey and Manage measures to eliminate redundancy.
- Clarify and amend other species-specific measures, including those for bats and apply them to all Northwest Forest Plan land allocations.
- Clarify which activities require pre-disturbance surveys and where in the planning process they should be conducted.

A decision selecting one of the action alternatives presented in this SEIS would amend the management direction in existing Forest Service land and resource management plans and Regional Guides, and BLM resource management plans in the Northwest Forest Plan area (range of the northern spotted owl). The new direction would be effective 30 days after publication of a notice of the Record of Decision in the Federal Register.

## Scoping

Scoping is the term used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities associated with the proposed action in an environmental impact statement. According to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, scoping is specifically not required for supplements to environmental impact statements (CEQ Regulations Implementing NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1502.9(c)(4)).

The Agencies, however, did conduct scoping for this SEIS. A Notice of Intent to prepare this SEIS was published in the Federal Register (63 FR 65167) on November 25, 1998. The Notice of Intent provided preliminary information about the proposed action and invited public comment. In late December 1998, the Agencies distributed a letter to approximately 1,200 individuals and groups identified as potentially interested in this proposed action and analysis. The letter provided additional detail about this analysis and again invited public input. The Agencies received 66 letters in response to the Notice of Intent and the letter.

Scoping also borrowed from the 80 public comments to the Agencies October 7, 1998, environmental assessment proposing a 1-year delay in surveys prior to ground-disturbing activities for 32 Survey and Manage species. (See Changing Standards and Guidelines - Adaptive Management in Chapter 2 for more detail about this environmental assessment.) In addition, scoping built on the efforts discussed in the Northwest Forest Plan Draft SEIS (USDA, USDI 1993, pp. 1-3 and 1-4) and the public comments on the Draft SEIS (USDA, USDI 1993; Appendix F in USDA, USDI 1994a; and USDA, USDI 1994b, pp. 58-73). This scoping helped define the issues and, subsequently, the range of alternatives presented in Chapter 2 of this SEIS.

## The Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

The CEQ regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) direct that agencies supplement an environmental impact statement:

*“... if the agency makes substantial changes in the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or if there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts” (40 CFR 1502.9 (c)(1)(i) and (ii)).*

In this case, the Agencies have new information on the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other species-specific measures and are proposing changes based on that new information. The proposed changes do not constitute an action separate and distinct from the Northwest Forest Plan and the land and resource management plans of the Agencies and do not warrant a new EIS. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyze the effects of the proposed action and alternatives in a supplemental EIS to the Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS and the FEISs for the BLM and Forest Service land and resource management plans referenced in the Northwest Forest Plan or prepared subsequent to it.

The analysis in this SEIS relies heavily on the analysis in the Northwest Forest Plan Final SEIS and, to a lesser extent, on the EISs prepared for the land and resource management plans of the Agencies. Such data and analysis are incorporated in this SEIS by reference (per 40 CFR 1502.21) to the extent that they continue to be relevant to, and are not superseded by, the contents of this SEIS.

As described above and in more detail in Chapter 2, selecting one of the action alternatives would result in amending the Agencies land and resource management plans that either incorporate or were amended by the Northwest Forest Plan.